

## **Nevada's Medical School Comes of Age**

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THE UNIVERSITY OF NEVADA, RENO (UNR),\* Health Sciences Program was authorized in 1969 by an act of the Nevada State Legislature to provide education and training for Nevadans wishing to pursue careers in medicine. The university then developed a school comprising the first two years of medical school. The first chartered class of 32 students entered a two-year basic science program in 1971 located on the UNR campus. Until that time Nevadans who wished to enter the field of medicine had to seek educational opportunities out of state, and relatively few students from the state entered medical school each year.

From 1971 through 1979, nine classes, totaling 392 students, began their medical education at the school. All members of the first five classes at the two-year school transferred to degree-granting programs at 35 medical schools throughout the United States. Many of these students have completed their education and postgraduate training

and are now practicing medicine in Nevada and throughout the West.

In December 1976 the Board of Regents of the University of Nevada system unanimously approved "A Proposal for the Development of a Degree-Granting Medical School Initially With Residencies in Primary Care."

The decision to convert to a four-year, degree-granting school was made for several reasons, including (1) increasing difficulties in assuring students' transfer, (2) increasing awareness of the need for community physicians to meet Nevada's health care needs, (3) the national trend, accompanied by financial incentives, for all two-year schools of basic science to convert to four-year, degree-granting schools and (4) the increasing cost to students going out of state to school (estimated at \$900,000 annually), as well as increased cost to the state for students who are subsidized out of state, such as those under the Western Interstate Commission on Higher Education program (approximately \$720,000 annually).

Following Governor Mike O'Callaghan's strong public endorsement of the conversion of the school, the Nevada State Legislature on April 14, 1977, passed Assembly Concurrent Resolution No. 18 "memorializing the Board of Regents of

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\*University of Nevada, Reno, is a division of the University of Nevada system. Other divisions are the University of Nevada, Las Vegas; Community College division, with four community colleges; and Desert Research Institute, a statewide multifaceted research division.

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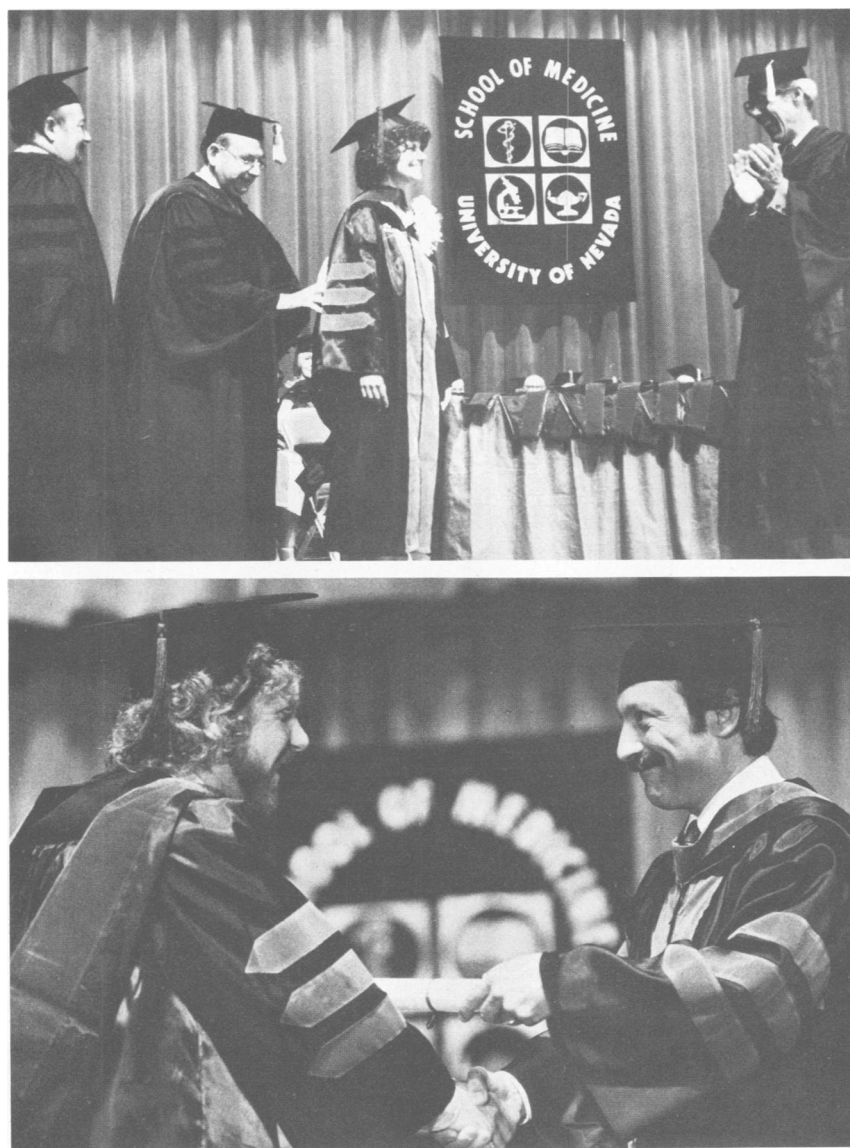
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the University of Nevada to extend the medical school of the university to a four-year school which would award the degree of Doctor of Medicine." In contrast to the political battles and legislative uncertainties regarding the establishment of the two-year school that occurred in the legislatures of 1967 and 1969, the 1977 Nevada State Legislature enthusiastically endorsed the conversion and further development of the school.

The legislature was undoubtedly influenced in its positive decision by the success of the two-year school, the acceptance of its students into degree-granting institutions and the awareness that both the long-term future success of the school and access to medical education for its young people would be dependent on the state and its

university system developing a complete medical education program. The availability of a large conversion grant from the federal government and the support of numerous benefactors probably influenced the legislature's decision as well.

Based largely on the positive action of the Nevada State Legislature, the Liaison Committee on Medical Education voted in 1977 to issue "A Letter of Reasonable Assurance" for conversion. Their decision was based on their review of plans that called for a "Community Based Medical School" utilizing particularly the ample resources of the hospitals in Reno and Las Vegas. The plans outlined to the board of regents, legislature and the liaison committee have been accomplished. The charter junior class students began



**Figure 1.**—University of Nevada, Reno, School of Medicine's first academic hooding ceremony, May 16, 1980. **(Top)** From left to right: George Smith, MD, founding dean; Reuben Zucker, MD, presenting hood to Karen Arcotta, president of the class of 1980, and Thomas Scully, MD, second dean of the school of medicine. **(Bottom)** Steven Jackson, MD, member of the class of 1980, receiving a copy of the Hippocratic oath from Acting Dean Ernest L. Mazzaferri, MD.

their third-year clinical clerkships in Reno and Las Vegas in the summer of 1978.

In April 1980 the Liaison Committee on Medical Education accredited for two years the newly developed four-year medical education program at the university, thereby granting permission to the Board of Regents of the University of Nevada to grant its first Doctor of Medicine degrees from an accredited school.

This first group of 36 students were awarded the Doctor of Medicine degree on May 17, 1980 (Figure 1). All of these students were successfully matched through the National Residency Matching Program and began graduate residency training throughout the country in July 1980.

The UNR School of Medicine is university and community based. The patients, facilities and staff of its affiliated hospitals and clinics throughout Nevada provide a broad educational base for the school's clinical curriculum. Its affiliation agreements provide access to clinical hospital facilities totaling more than 2,000 beds. In addition to approximately 80 full-time faculty, there are more than 200 community physicians from throughout the state involved in the school's programs, which are designed to provide the students with a broad base in the science and art of medicine.

Students rotate through clinical disciplines in both cities. In addition, all students rotate through a rural elective in their senior year, giving them a broad experience in urban and rural medicine. Small classes, anticipated to include no more than 48 students per year, permit individual attention to students in every phase of their development. These efforts culminated in the graduation of 36 senior students from the school of medicine in May 1980. About two thirds of this class entered primary care residencies in hospitals throughout the country. The others began residency programs representing virtually every major discipline in medicine.

### **Financing the Conversion**

According to Mrs. Edna Brigham, director of development for the medical school, federal conversion funds amounting to \$2,400,000 were the major source of support for the conversion to a four-year school. They were supplemented by a W. K. Kellogg five-year grant of \$680,304, which made possible the recruitment of qualified faculty and the development of the educational program in the southern part of the state.

The year following approval by the state legislature to convert the school was a complex one with overlapping and interdependent deadlines for accrediting programs and grant applications. The curriculum for the third and fourth years was approved and the clinical Departments of Internal Medicine, Pediatrics, and Family and Community Medicine had their graduate programs approved in time to be awarded residency grants by the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare.

A generous gift of \$2,000,000 to the school by a Las Vegas building contractor, Claude I. Howard, provided the impetus to plan a much needed laboratory facility to accommodate the four-year school. This gift was supplemented by a generous grant of \$2,000,000 from the Max C. Fleischmann Foundation to complete the capital improvement fund for this building.

In the first year of the conversion (1977-1978) the state appropriated \$1,239,000, or 49 percent of the total budget of \$2,520,000. In the second year (1978-1979) of that legislative biennium the state appropriated \$1,597,000, or 47 percent of the total budget of \$3,555,000. In the next legislative biennium the legislature increased its appropriation to \$2,867,000 for 1979-1980, and for the year 1980-1981 its appropriation was over \$4,095,000, representing 75.2 percent of the total budget. The state of Nevada seems now to have accepted its medical school and its responsibility to provide adequately for medical education needs in the state.

### **Residency Programs**

Simultaneous with the development of the third-year clerkships and fourth-year electives, three primary care residency programs in internal medicine, pediatrics, and family and community medicine were also instituted on July 1, 1979.

#### *Internal Medicine*

In July 1979 residency programs in internal medicine were begun in Reno and Las Vegas, with Dr. Ernest Mazzaferri as chairman and Dr. Alfred Thompson, Jr., as director. Six first-year residents began training in each location. Three of the six first-year residents in Reno were UNR graduates. All 12 residents were graduates of medical schools in the United States.

In July 1980 there were 26 residents in internal medicine—13 in Reno and 13 in Las Vegas.

Seven of these 26 are UNR graduates. The program in Reno involves two primary teaching hospitals, Washoe Medical Center and the Veterans Administration Medical Center, plus an ambulatory care teaching center. The three-year residency program in Reno has residents numbering seven, five and one in the respective years of training. The program in Las Vegas is administered at Southern Nevada Memorial Hospital where there are seven, four and two residents in medicine in each respective year of training.

During the past year faculty from Las Vegas and Reno interchanged frequently, making rounds and giving conferences. It is anticipated that there will be an exchange of second- and third-year residents between the hospitals in Reno and Las Vegas. Third-year residents will also spend considerable time in smaller communities, such as Carson City and Elko, and at the Schurz Indian Public Health Hospital.

Participation by practicing clinicians had added immeasurably to the strength of the residency programs, as it had already done in the student teaching programs. The spectrum of pathology and clinical experience has been more than adequate at all participating hospitals and clinics.

Internal medicine residency positions were filled for 1980 and already the school has received more than 50 requests from students around the country for application for the 1981 program.

#### *Family and Community Medicine and Family Practice*

The Department of Family and Community Medicine under its chairman, Robert Martin, MD, was founded in 1978, at the same time as other clinical departments, and became involved in training third- and fourth-year medical students. In addition to medical school instruction, the department is also responsible for the operation of a community health center for low-income patients, which is funded by an Urban Health Initiative grant. The department also uses it as a family practice center, as well as for teaching students and training residents in family practice.

Residencies in family practice were started on July 1, 1979. In addition to their experience in the family practice center they will receive training at Washoe Medical Center and the Veterans Administration Medical Center. It is a three-year

program with six residents in the first year, two in the second and two in the third.

#### *Pediatrics*

The pediatric residency program under the supervision of Dr. Burt Dudding, chairman of the Department of Pediatrics, is a three-year program at Washoe Medical Center, designed to qualify residents for certification by the American Board of Pediatrics. There are four residents planned for each of the three years of the program.

#### *Surgery*

Dr. Ralph DePalma, newly selected chairman of the Department of Surgery, is planning a surgical residency program anticipated to begin in 1981 at the Veterans Administration Medical Center in Reno and Southern Nevada Memorial Hospital in Las Vegas, with probable affiliation with other community hospitals to be determined at a later date. This plan will cover both northern and southern Nevada.

#### *Obstetrics and Gynecology*

According to Dr. George Furman, chairman of the Department of Obstetrics and Gynecology, proceedings are underway to initiate residencies in obstetrics and gynecology in 1981. These will be carried out at Southern Nevada Memorial Hospital in Las Vegas, with some emphasis on intensive neonatal care given through a center at Sunrise Hospital in Las Vegas.

#### **Student Affairs**

Dr. Owen Peck, associate dean for student affairs, has noted that the conversion has doubled the number of students, which immediately placed an increased burden on financial aid resources. Fortunately, with the decrease in federal loans, private citizens and voluntary organizations have come to the aid of financially distressed medical students. The Fred M. Anderson Scholarship endowment, which was established by the medical students as their contribution toward future students, has had donations from many Nevadans, particularly physicians. In 1980 a \$622,000 gift was given by the Hubert McCoskey family to the medical school for a medical student scholarship endowment. The Nevada Division of the American Cancer Society has also established an annual scholarship, initiated by William P. Barry of Las

Vegas. In 1981 this will be increased to 18 scholarships for medical students in need. Many other donors are giving annual scholarships as well.

### **Administration Changes and Faculty Recruitment**

George Smith, MD, a strong influence in the development of the medical school, and its first dean, resigned in November 1977 to assume the position of professor of pathology and director of the Veterans Administration Southeastern Regional Medical Education Center at the University of Alabama in Birmingham. He was succeeded by Dean Thomas Scully, MD, who had served as associate dean under him in Nevada. Dr. Scully carried through the negotiations among the regents, legislature and liaison committee that led to the conversion to a four-year school. Unfortunately, prolonged illness and an operation caused him to resign as dean in October 1979, when he assumed a less demanding role as professor of pediatrics.

Ernest Mazzaferri, MD, an outstanding endocrinologist who had been recruited as chairman of the Department of Medicine from Ohio State University was selected in October 1979 to serve as acting dean. He has very ably carried out the completion of the conversion, initiating residency programs, recruiting clinical faculty and solving the thousands of problems of a neophyte four-year school. As Dr. Mazzaferri accepted the deanship only temporarily, Dr. Robert Daughtery, associate dean of the Indiana University School of Medicine was recently selected as dean of the University of Nevada, Reno, School of Medicine. Dr. Daughtery is a nationally recognized educator with command expertise in administration of medicine. He brings to Nevada enthusiasm, knowledge and experience which will serve the school of medicine well.

### **Continuing Medical Education**

In 1973 the school of medicine was accredited by the American Medical Association to sponsor continuing medical education (CME) programs throughout Nevada. It became apparent in 1974 that the best way to carry out such a program was to form a joint committee with the Nevada State Medical Association. This made it possible for the Nevada State Medical Association, with its organizational abilities and many specialists, and the UNR School of Medicine, with its consultation and research abilities, to work together towards a common end. Most members of the Joint

Committee on Continuing Medical Education are practicing physicians, including representatives from the rural areas. It is now possible for most physicians throughout the state to meet the requirements for certification of the AMA Physician's Recognition Award without leaving their community. The Nevada State Legislature has passed a mandatory CME law (recertification) which will probably be implemented by the Board of Medical Examiners in January 1981.

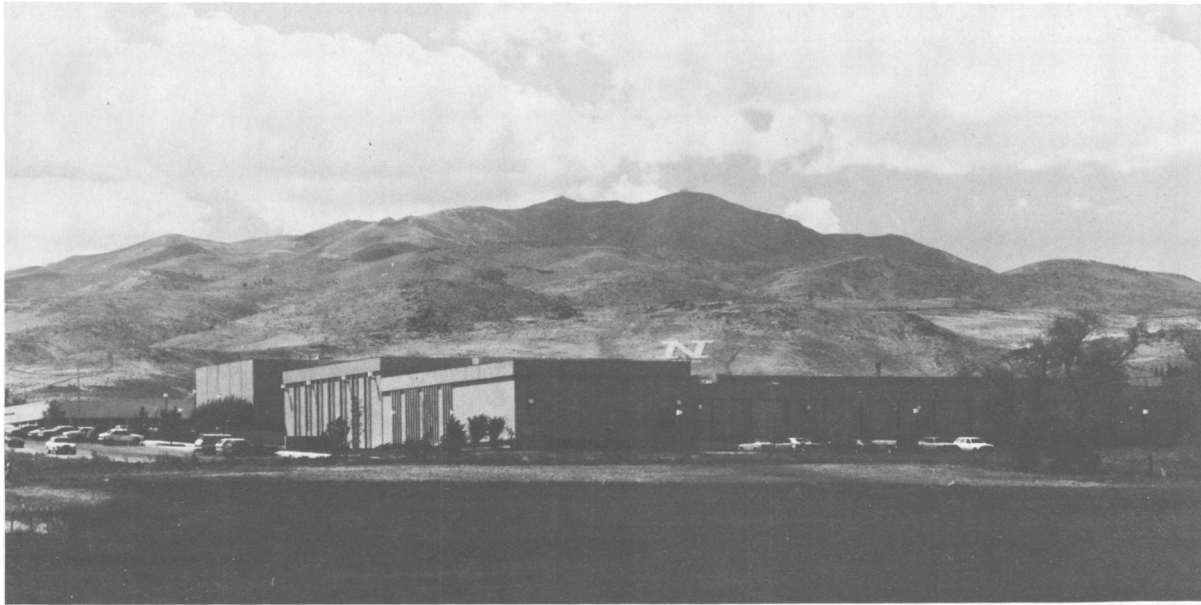
### **Rural Health**

Throughout the development of the school there has always been a strong commitment to respond actively to the health needs of rural Nevada. To accomplish this, in 1978 Dean George Smith appointed Dr. DeWitt C. Baldwin, Jr, to the position of assistant dean for rural health and authorized creation of the Office of Rural Health. In early 1979 the school received a grant of \$400,000 from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation to undertake a broad program of activities designed to improve health care delivery to the rural areas of Nevada.

The objectives of the new office fell into two areas (1) rural health manpower recruitment and retention and (2) the creation of a statewide liaison, communication and information system in rural health. The first set of activities included: recruiting and retaining physicians and other health professionals, establishing a liaison with the National Health Service Corps, developing a clinical field faculty network, arranging for rural preceptorships for medical students and primary care residents, developing a medical consultation program for rural health professionals, and assessing and developing programs to meet the CME needs of providers of rural health care.

The Office of Rural Health represents a clear interface with the health care system throughout the state, particularly in rural areas, and clearly demonstrates the commitment of the school to rural health. An example of the latter was the appointment of more than 40 physicians from rural areas in Nevada to clinical faculty positions during the past year, and the assignment of all 36 senior students to required month-long rotations in 12 of the state's rural communities.

An as yet unassessed factor of great importance to the rural areas of Nevada and Utah may be the potential impact of the MX missile system, which could double the populations of many rural com-



**Figure 2.**—The University of Nevada, Reno, School of Medicine, with the Sierra Nevada Mountains in the background.

munities in these two states. It is obvious that the influx of new people to construction sites and later to operational points would create massive dislocations, as well as pressures on existing health, social and educational services within these communities. Public health issues such as water supply, sewage disposal, environmental protection, housing and transportation, would emerge as new and important problems for these rural communities and the physicians who practice in them.

Nevada's state medical school must continue to be responsive to the intent of the legislature in caring for the state's changing communities, both urban and rural. It is preparing for this challenge.

Acting Dean Mazzaferri believes that the future

of the University of Nevada, Reno, School of Medicine looks bright. The medical school as it exists today is shown in Figure 2. In the spring of 1981 ground will be broken for a new 5 million dollar research building. A new ambulatory patient research and education building to cost 6 million dollars is in the planning stages and established investigators and educators, as well as young, promising new faculty continue to join the ranks of the school. Dr. Mazzaferri states,

We look to develop a small, educationally superior school of medicine, which by strong affiliation and interchange with the community, will educate students according to the highest standards in medicine, so they will be prepared to go to residencies in whatever field of specialty they choose.